

News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth

For Immediate Release

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PAT AND PATTY RIIBE OF YANKTON HONORED AS CONGRESSIONAL "ANGELS IN ADOPTION"

September 14, 2005, Washington, DC – Pat and Patty Riibe, who live near Yankton, SD, were honored last night by U.S. Representative Stephanie Herseth as Congressional "Angels in Adoption" for their commitment to children in need of permanent, safe, and loving homes.

Herseth, a member of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, said, "I am proud to recognize Pat and Patty Riibe as 'Angels in Adoption.' In opening their homes and their hearts to children in need, Pat and Patty personify selflessness and generosity of spirit. They represent the best of South Dakota, and I am very pleased to shine a light on the good work they do."

Pat and Patty Riibe and their children live on a 36-acre farm west of Yankton, South Dakota. They are former foster parents and continue to keep busy with eight children at home, ranging from ages 11 to 18. Patty says, "Some people collect baseball cards. We seem to collect kids." She was never able to have biological children; however, she had one adopted son prior to marrying her husband Pat, who was raising three children on his own.

In 1994, they became a foster family and ten years later decided to give up their license. Patty said, "We basically ran out of room at home. We fell in love with the kids and didn't want to part with them. When they were free for adoption, we legally added the children to our family, including a sibling group of five." Some of the children have special needs, but the Riibe's focus is on their abilities. Patty says, "At our house we don't expect perfection, rather, we encourage individuality. You won't see most of our children's names on the Honor Roll but you will see them as the first to volunteer to help the janitor sweep the floor or help the teacher. We have been truly blessed." The Riibes also have mentored teenagers involved with the courts including two teenagers who they did not adopt, but who lived in their home and are very much part of their family.

Patty, a native of Madison, SD, grew up in a family with 14 children. She is a past president of the Yankton County Child Protection Team, served on the Interstate Committee Against Abuse and Neglect (ICAN), and is currently chair of South Dakota Advocacy's PAMI (Protection and Advocacy of the Mentally Ill) Advisory Board. Her voice can be heard on various PSA's on radio stations throughout the state, as she recorded messages for South Dakota Advocacy's anti-stigma campaign.

Her professional work experiences include serving children and families through the University of South Dakota Head Start program and working in the mental health field. She currently is employed as a psychiatric social worker and the director of Children's Clinical Services at Lewis & Clark Behavioral Health in Yankton. Patty mentors other social workers by serving as practicum instructor for the University of South Dakota, University of Minnesota, University of Nebraska and University of Iowa. Patty also serves on the USD Social Work Advisory Board. In her spare time, she has a small private practice specific to home studies for child custody evaluations and private adoptions.

Pat, a native of South Sioux City, NE, is self-employed as a residential land developer. He is the owner and operator of Riibe Contracting, and does everything from dirt work to handyman jobs. In his spare time, Pat has volunteered on the Big Friend, Little Friend Board of Directors and for several years was a co-facilitator for the PRIDE Program, a training and recruitment program for foster and adoptive parents through the South Dakota Department of Social Services Child Protection Services.

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Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth serves South Dakota in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats committed to fiscal discipline and strong national security, and is co-chair of the Rural Working Group, which is dedicated to raising the profile of issues important to rural America. She also serves on three committees vital to South Dakota's interests: Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs and Resources.